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SIPDIS

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TAGS: OPRC KMDR TU PREL KPAO
SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2009

Media Highlights

More Soldiers Yes, Combat No (Aksam)
Mass circulation Aksam headlines in "More Soldiers Yes, Combat No" that Turkish PM Erdogan will agree to an additional 500 more troops for the new Afghanistan surge, but they won't be in combat. Cumhuriyet concurs that Turkey will offer more troops (number unspecified) while Islamist-oriented Zaman in "We Don't Want to Fight," notes President Gul's comments on 12/3 that "if we fight, we will lose the respect of all sides, including the Taliban" but that Erdogan will stress that Turkey was ready to continue to make contributions in Afghanistan in his December 7 meeting with President Obama. Mainstream Hurriyet in "Uncle Sam Wants 1000 More Combat Troops" reports that the US has been actively pressuring Turkey to increase its numbers and that Ambassador Jeffrey was "feeling the pulse of Ankara" before the PM's upcoming White House meeting. CNNTurk TV and online writes in "5,000 Troops Pledged to Afghanistan," that "NATO member countries plan to send 5,000 more troops to Afghanistan. CNNTurk reported that Italy, Poland, England, Spain, Czech Republic and Slovakia have agreed to boost their troop commitment but Turkey will hold at around 1700, having recently boosted numbers in taking over the Kabul regional command last month. CNN Turk also reported on Turkey's bid at NATO to include Bosnia in MAP.

Mainstream Milliyet columnist Sami Kohen says that "President Obama wanted to show that the war in Afghanistan is not only a US war and asked for active support from the international community, mainly not to allow Afghanistan and its neighbors to be dominated by an out-dated Taliban regime." He adds, however, that Turkey's strategy is based on cultural ties to Afghanistan and therefore, "it will not be possible for Erdogan to accept such a request from President Obama." Mainstream Hurriyet columnist Oktay Eksi reflects his concern that Erdogan will ultimately say yes to Obama's request for more troops. "This is not a new request for Turkey to take an active role," he writes, "However, just glancing in the past, we'll see many cases that Turkey's red lines have been violated by the AKP government." Noting that the GoT has caved in previous stances regarding Barzani and others, Eksi writes "that is why we are concerned that Erdogan will change his stance on Afghanistan issue as well and accept Obama's request."

Holbrooke: Turkey Has Huge Potential in Afghanistan (Radikal) Liberal Radikal, in an above the fold banner story headlined "Turkey Is Indispensable," showcases Radikal columnist Murat Yetkin's exclusive interview with Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke. In his 12/4 column, Yetkin writes that Holbrooke commented that: "We are not requesting anything from Turkey for Afghanistan and Pakistan. We are talking about what else we can do together with Turkey. There is already Turkish military presence in Afghanistan, anyway. If Turkey doesn't send additional troops, it will not harm our Afghanistan policies. However, Turkey's impact on Afghanistan is more than any other country and second after the US. Turkey has the potential to do more in Afghanistan than any other country. We believe that Turkey's cooperation in the fight in Afghanistan and Pakistan, is indispensable for the US. Therefore, we are working intensively with Turkey." Murat Yetkin concludes that "as President Gul said, it is critically important that Turkey is not a fighting force in that region" and notes that "the US and NATO has started to see this, as well."

Davutoglu: Turkey Will Press Hard for Bosnia's NATO-MAP Membership (CNNTurk, BBC) CNNTurk and BBC report from Brussels that Foreign Minister Davutoglu said Turkey would press hard for NATO membership for Bosnia-Herzegovina and stressed that Bosnians felt left out by the EU, which has extended visa-free travel to Serbia and Montenegro. "We want Bosnia-Herzegovina to feel that the international community cares for them," said Davutoglu, "we cannot forget that we watched three years of massacres in Bosnia-Herzegovina, now we can't just leave them alone."

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Davutoglu Details Efforts for Cooperation With Greece (Radikal) Papers reported that FM Davutoglu said Turkey and Greece should turn their problems into advantage by agreeing on a common vision for the future. Islamist-oriented Zaman says that Davutoglu, who also interviewed with Greek Ta Nea, agreed to four important principles with Greek PM/FM Papandreou. Returning on plane from Athens on his way to Brussels, Zaman and Radikal report that Davutoglu listed four priorities: establishing a joint high level strategic mechanism; adopting a joint Turkey - Greece attitude towards the EU; establishing regional cooperation measures in the Balkans, Middle East, Eastern Med and the Caucasus; and cooperating in global level initiatives such as the upcoming Copenhagen Climate Change conference.

Constitutional Court to Hear DTP Closure Case December 8 Islamist-oriented Zaman reports the Constitutional Court would begin hearing on December 8 the closure case which had been filed against the Kurdish DTP for being a focal point of separatist activities. The court rapporteur is reportedly weighing for closure. If the party is closed, its lawmakers could be given political bans of five years each. The votes of seven out of the 11 court members are needed for disbanding the party. Liberal Radikal says the case was filed two years ago, but the court has decided to hear it now, in the middle of the government's Kurdish "democratic overture" process.

Fight Against Climate Change: Turkey's Growing Support Today's Zaman reports that President Gul is planning to attend the last two days of the Copenhagen climate change conference and reports that parliamentarians hailed the move as evidence of Turkey's growing support for the fight against global climate change. Speaking at the inauguration of Turkey's new water pipeline system, Gul noted that "with today's modern systems, it is possible to use and benefit from the water currently emptying into the Mediterranean." Anatolian News Agency reports on the ongoing Economic Coordination Council meeting in Ankara that is addressing climate change issues ahead of Copenhagen. Meanwhile, in "Turkish Farmers to Reap Bitter Harvest," Hurriyet Daily News online reports that "Turkey will have a climate similar to that in North Africa with increasing temperature and decreasing precipitation" which will "threaten food quality and agricultural productivity." The paper cites experts from Ankara University's agriculture department who testified that "climate change is likely to hit the production of

crops that require water, such as cotton and sugar beets" and commented that Turkey should invest in high-tech irrigation systems and the production of drought-resistant crops.

TV News (NTV)

Domestic

Q Pharmacists, claiming they suffer great losses over the government discount on medicine prices, will pull down shutters Friday.

Q Opposition CHP and MHP have voiced concern that the PKK's imprisoned leader Abdullah Ocalan could be granted a "retrial."

Q 46 more people die of the pandemic strain of H1N1 and the total death toll in Turkey climbs to 223.

Q Fitch Ratings upgrades Turkey's credit ranking two levels to BB+.

Q Airbus has announced Turkey plans to buy 277 new aircraft worth USD 28.3 billion over the next 20 years.

World

Q A survey conducted in France shows that 46 percent of French people were against the construction of minarets.

Q The White House Spokesman Robert Gibbs told a news briefing time was running out for Iran to avoid sanctions over its nuclear program.

Q Afghanistan's President Karzai said he was willing to talk with

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the Taliban chief in a bid to bring peace to the country.

Q The Kremlin has announced Russia and the Vatican have agreed to establish full diplomatic relations.

JEFFREY